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ABSTRACT

This document presents "I'm Positive: Growing Up With Self-Esteem," an informal, personal study course designed to strengthen the reader's ability to nurture self-esteem in children from birth through adolescence. Special emphasis is given to four parenting skills: acceptance, encouragement, empowerment, and love. Weekly activities are provided that will help readers apply what they learn to their relationships with children. Six sections are included in this workbook and readers are encouraged to spend approximately one week considering each of the six sections. The Week 1 section provides an introduction to self-esteem. The Week 2 section contends that parents' beliefs about themselves will influence their effectiveness in nurturing self-esteem in their children. Week 3 focuses on the first core belief underlying self-esteem - that others appreciate one's uniqueness and want to be with him/her. Week 4 concentrates on the second core belief underlying self-esteem - the conviction that the future holds promise. Week 5 focuses on the third belief - the conviction that one has influence in relationships and in one's life. Week 6 emphasizes the fourth belief underlying self-esteem - the conviction that one can give and receive affection, can nurture and be nurtured by others. Also included are a list of 100 ways for a parent to say "Very good!" to their child and a list of recommended readings. (NB)

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Growing Up With Self-Esteem

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INTRODUCTION

Parents and others who work with young people are concerned about self-esteem. "Helping children with self-esteem" was rated the second most important topic in human development in a recent survey conducted by Kansas Extension Home Economics, closely following "Supporting friends through troubled times."

We know that self-esteem has a significant effect on young people's behavior and attitudes. We also know that children and adolescents today face numerous challenges as they grow up:

From 7.5 to 9.5 million children in the U.S. (12 to 15 percent of those under 18) suffer from a mental health problem severe enough to require treatment. The most common childhood psychiatric disorders include depression (between 5 and 10 percent of youth) and conduct disorders (about 4 to 10 percent of youth). Researchers have also found that delinquent and psychiatrically disturbed adolescents have low self-esteem.[1]

During 1986 there were 1 million confirmed cases of child abuse in the United States.[2]

In 1983, about a million teenage pregnancies occurred in the United States resulting in about 500,000 babies being born to teen mothers. Having a baby before age 18 reduces the mother's chances of graduating from high school by 50 percent.[3]

The suicide rate for the 15- to 24-year-old age group more than doubled between 1960 and 1980. Each day about 13 young people kill themselves.

In 1985, 37 percent of high school seniors reported that they had drunk heavily during the preceding 2 weeks. Five percent drink alcohol every day.

About 390,000 youths ages 12-17 were cocaine users in 1985.[4]

Children who have high self-esteem—who have self-respect, who believe in themselves and their future, who feel competent and loved—are more prepared to navigate the troubled waters of modern society.

1. "Children's Mental Health: Promising Responses to Neglected Problems," a factsheet of the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, September 1987. 2. USDA Extension Teleconference, February 25, 1988. 3. "Adolescent Pregnancy Fact Sheet" available from Kansas Action for Children, Inc. 4. Update from the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration, Fall, 1987.

I'm Positive: Growing Up With Self-Esteem is an informal, personal study course that will strengthen your ability to nurture self-esteem in children from birth through adolescence. There is nothing to mail, no class to register for, no tests. You learn at home, at your own pace.

During this period of study you will be asked to consider the impact self-esteem has on the lives of both parents and children. You will have the opportunity to reflect on your own childhood and how your earlier experiences may affect how you relate to young people. Special emphasis is given to four parenting skills: acceptance, encouragement, empowerment, and love. Weekly activities are provided that will help you apply what you learn to your relationships with children.

Set aside a reasonable period of time for each section. A week is suggested, though you may prefer a longer or slightly shorter period of study. In any case, do not rush yourself. Take the time you need to reflect on the information and the activities. Make a contract with yourself to finish, but feel free to pick up where you left off if you find yourself setting the material aside longer than you intended.

Share this course with a friend or, better yet, find a partner who is willing to discuss the material and activities with you on a weekly basis. You might also keep a journal of your thoughts and reactions as a way of stimulating your thinking, especially if you are taking the course alone.

Contact your county extension office if you would like to provide others with copies of this course. Other materials on topics related to *I'm Positive: Growing Up With Self-Esteem* are also available.

Charles A. Smith
Extension Specialist
Human Development

Week 1

Introduction to self-esteem

Self-esteem is the value we place on what we believe to be true about ourselves. Self-esteem involves a sequence of thinking and feeling:

1. We have beliefs about ourselves and our relationships;
2. We place a value on these beliefs, and then
3. We experience a positive or negative feeling about what we think is true of ourselves.

For example, a child believes that his parents do not love him because they are always too busy to spend time with him. "I must be awful," he concludes. "I'm just a nobody; how could anyone ever love somebody like me?" Although some of this anger may be directed toward his parents, most of his hostility will be reserved for himself. Self-hate lies at the core of low self-worth. Children with low self-esteem believe that there is something intrinsically wrong with them. They are faulty merchandise.

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** on a separate sheet, make a list similar to the following:

List at least five things you believe to be true for yourself. Think about how you feel about these characteristics. You may like some, dislike others, and feel neutral toward the rest. You may be aware of some evaluations and less conscious of others. If you could add up all of your reactions to everything you believe about yourself, you would be determining your self-esteem.

	Five beliefs about myself:	*How I feel about these beliefs:*
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

High self-esteem is based on four core beliefs:

Others care about me and accept me for who I am. Their acceptance has nurtured my self-respect. I am a <u>person</u>.

Others have encouraged me to look forward to a positive future. Their belief in me has nurtured my hope. I am gradually forming a vision for my life; I am a <u>dreamer</u>.

PERSON ⬅ ➡ DREAMER

ACCEPTANCE — ENCOURAGEMENT

LOVE — EMPOWERMENT

FRIEND ⬅ ➡ CHAMPION

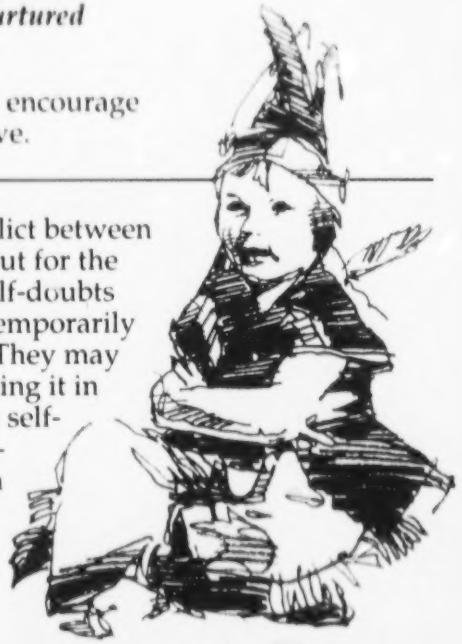
Others have loved and cherished me. Their affection has deepened my compassion for others. I am a <u>friend</u>.

Others have helped me feel more competent. I am gradually learning self-control and recognizing my inner strength. Their guidance has nurtured my courage. I am a <u>champion</u>.

Person, Dreamer, Champion, Friend—four qualities that we can encourage through our acceptance, encouragement, empowerment, and love.

Each of us at times feels rejected, discouraged, powerless, and unloved.

In every person's mind there is a conflict between positive beliefs and their opposites. But for the person with high self-esteem, these self-doubts and fears are like shadows that pass temporarily through the landscapes of the mind. They may dim one's sense of worth without casting it in permanent darkness. In general, high self-esteem means that one feels more self-respect than self-hate, more hope than despair, more courage than fear, more compassion than indifference.



Self-esteem is important for two reasons:

FIRST, we act consistently with our beliefs and feelings about ourselves. If a child believes something is true, that belief affects his or her actions just as though it were actually true.

SECOND, our perceptions of the world around us are filtered through our self-esteem. Children's beliefs about themselves act as a screen that may distort their view of what really happens to them.

Children who believe they are unattractive, stupid, or unpleasant may withdraw or draw attention to themselves in socially unacceptable ways. They may be attracted to models who glorify the ugly, the unkempt, the weird, for the illusion of individuality.

Children who experience despair about their future may become depressed and fail to apply themselves at school.

Children who believe they are powerless or incompetent may act in a destructive manner toward themselves or others.

Children who feel unlovable may cling and become dependent on parents or avoid close ties altogether.

The child with low self-worth focuses on failure instead of success, problems instead of challenges, difficulties instead of possibilities. A child with low self-esteem experiences the world as a dark and gloomy place, filled with danger and threat. A child with high self-esteem may see the world, with all its assets and liabilities, more realistically.

Children's beliefs and feelings about themselves are difficult to change because children are likely to interpret our words to fit their own self-image.

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** list three things one of your children does that you think is unpleasant or harmful. Try to trace the action back to the beliefs that influence his or her actions. What might be going through your child's mind at the time? How does your child feel about him- or herself? Finally, how has this self-image affected other aspects of his or her life?

Positive or high self-esteem provides the basis for meeting the challenges of life self-confidently.

Children form their self-images through involvement with others, especially their parents. Children learn from watching us, from experiencing the world around them, and from listening to us.

Between 15 and 18 months, children begin to be aware of what they look like. For the first time, they can recognize themselves in pictures.

Preschool children conceive of the self strictly in physical terms—they define themselves by what they look like, their physical possessions, and especially in terms of what they can do.

At about 8 years of age children can distinguish between mind and body. They can understand that one's thoughts and feelings make one different from others.

Adolescents are more likely to describe themselves in terms of their values and beliefs and their relationships. They are much more capable of self-reflection and introspection.

The years surrounding puberty can be difficult because of dramatic changes in a young person's life. Adolescents are beginning to think more maturely and are likely to engage in an intense probing, scrutiny, and evaluation of themselves. These changes can disrupt personal identity and force adolescents to re-examine their beliefs about themselves and others.

The most turbulent period for self-esteem is early adolescence.

If we hope to nurture self-esteem in young people of any age, we have to strengthen their self-respect, hope in the future, courage, and compassion.

There are no quick fixes. Changing children's opinions of themselves is a difficult task. We cannot make our children believe in themselves. We cannot make them learn from our experience. Ultimately, they must make their own decisions about what is true and false in their lives and learn from their own successes and failures.

Week 2

Preparing oneself

Parents' beliefs about themselves will influence their effectiveness in nurturing self-esteem in their children. Parents with low self-worth may find their efforts ineffective or even harmful.

Parents who feel inadequate may withdraw from the responsibilities of childrearing.

Parents who are preoccupied with their own failed dreams may set unreasonable goals for their children—goals that are based on their own ambitions and not those of their children.

Parents who feel powerless may use excessively severe discipline or become emotionally abusive.

Parents who believe they are unloved and unlovable may emotionally smother their children.

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** take some time to reflect on your own self-esteem during childhood. Can you recall a time when someone really crunched your self-worth? Maybe a teacher or classmate said something cruel to you, or a parent did something to hurt your feelings. How did you react to this event? How about a time when someone contributed to your self-esteem? How did these experiences affect your life and your relationships with your children today?

An important first step in nurturing self-esteem in our children is to look inward to understand ourselves better. We strengthen our self-esteem by first being aware of our own self-beliefs, and then confronting those beliefs that are irrational and destructive:

I've got to be perfect if I am to be a good parent.

vs. ***My personal value does not depend on how perfect I am as a parent. We all make mistakes.***

I've got to be the boss. I must be in control and in charge all the time. My children are the products of my will.

vs. ***My children are individuals. They make choices independent of my will. I can slowly grant more and more autonomy to my children as they grow older.***

My children must like me all the time. If they don't I will feel depressed and discouraged.

vs. ***I enjoy being loved by my children, but I can survive without their complete approval. I must do what I think is right even though they might become upset.***

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** take a personal inventory of yourself. Look back at the first week's list of three things your child does that upsets you. Add more if you like. Go over each item and try to identify **your** underlying beliefs that influenced your response. How accurate are these beliefs? Are they reasonable? Are they supported by evidence?

Never give up on yourself or your children. Perseverance and patience are necessary to accomplish long-term change.

Changing unreasonable or destructive beliefs is extremely difficult. The place to start is to accept our tender spots and irrational beliefs while building and strengthening the wise and compassionate aspects of ourselves. "Yes, I often tell myself I have to be perfect. But after all, I'm only human. I make mistakes. Even with all my imperfections I am still doing the best I can."

Take time for yourself and help your spouse and friends also find the time to nurture themselves.

Spend time with friends who make you laugh, who are willing to listen and encourage the best in you.

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** do something special for yourself. Spend a restful evening browsing in a library, shopping, or watching a movie--something you really enjoy. Reward yourself for your hard work as a parent. If you have young children, another parent might be willing to set up a child care exchange to give you both some free time. Develop a plan for finding time to pursue your hobbies. How does this affect your relationships with your children?

Do not expect gratitude from your children until they reach maturity—at least until they are 45 years old. Children have a narrow perspective on their relationships with parents. Not until they are halfway through their journey can travelers begin to appreciate the efforts of their guide. Only time and experience can help your children understand your effort, your sacrifice, and the depth of your love.

Week 3

Acceptance: I am a person

The first core belief underlying self-esteem is the conviction that others appreciate your uniqueness and want to be with you. If we want to strengthen a child's self-respect, our words and actions should convey this message:

I want to be your mother (father, teacher, etc.). I am interested in you and what happens to you. I enjoy being with you. You are a unique person with your own strengths and weaknesses. You do not have to be different for me to accept you. You and I have a relationship that is important to me.

Children who matter to their parents have higher self-esteem than those who are overlooked. Children would rather be punished than ignored.

Children who feel they do not matter to their parents are more likely to be depressed, anxious and unhappy.

Children can accept themselves if our expectations are compatible with their temperament, age, and their physical and intellectual capabilities.

According to Stella Chess and Alexander Thomas, each child's temperament can vary within the following ranges:

ACTIVITY LEVEL: *Some children have a high level of motor activity and seem to be quite active. Others may have a typically low activity level.*

High active _____ **Low active**

REGULARITY: *Some children are very predictable in the timing of their biological functions, such as hunger, sleep-wake cycle, and bowel elimination. Others are more unpredictable in these functions.*

Very regular _____ **Unpredictable**

APPROACH/WITHDRAWAL: *Some children approach new situations with a lot of self-confidence. Others are more likely to withdraw from or avoid the unfamiliar.*

Approaches new situations _____ **Avoids new situations**

ADAPTABILITY: *Some children can adapt fairly quickly to new situations. Others may not adjust to change so easily.*

Adjusts easily _____ **Doesn't adjust**

SENSITIVITY: *Some children need only a low level of stimulation to cause a response. Others are more "thick skinned" and are not as likely to notice or be bothered by something.*

Very sensitive _____ **Doesn't notice**

MOOD: *Some children are typically pleasant, joyful, and friendly while others may have a more negative mood.*

Happy _____ **Gloomy**

INTENSITY OF REACTIONS: *Some children react intensely, whether positively or negatively, to what happens to them. Others typically react more mildly—they never seem really upset or really happy.*

Intense _____ **Mild**

DISTRACTIBILITY: *Some children are easily distracted while others fail to notice distractions.*

Distractible _____ **Focused**

PERSISTENCE AND ATTENTION SPAN: *Some children will stay with an activity over a long period. Others may lose interest in an activity more quickly.*

Persistent _____ **Easily distracted**

Keep in mind that your child's temperament could be rated anywhere along these continuums—high, middle, or low—not just at the extremes. Temperament is present at birth and remains fairly consistent across a person's life span.

Accepting a child means understanding that he or she is a unique person. One of the most difficult tasks for any parent is to come to terms with those characteristics—like maturity level, intelligence, appearance and temperament—that cannot be changed. Respect means making adjustments in the expectations we have for our children to match reality.

When we try to change inherent characteristics in our children we may send the message that there is something wrong with them. But maturity level, intelligence, appearance, or temperament does not make a child bad or good, worthless or valuable. Whatever this "package" may be, a child is a wonder, someone precious to be loved and nurtured. Every child has great potential.

Acceptance of a child does not mean approval of every action. Part of our responsibility is to set reasonable limits and confront unreasonable behavior.

Try to see the world through your children's eyes.

Help your children understand that they are special.

Talk with your children about the differences and similarities that can exist between people.

DURING THIS WEEK... go over this list of temperamental qualities and estimate where your children might fit. Examine the list once more and rate yourself. You might also compare your estimates with your spouse's. Could some of the conflict with your children involve a mismatch in temperaments? How do your children differ in temperament?

Children who believe they have to perform up to a parent's expectations in order to be accepted are likely to feel a diminished sense of self-worth.

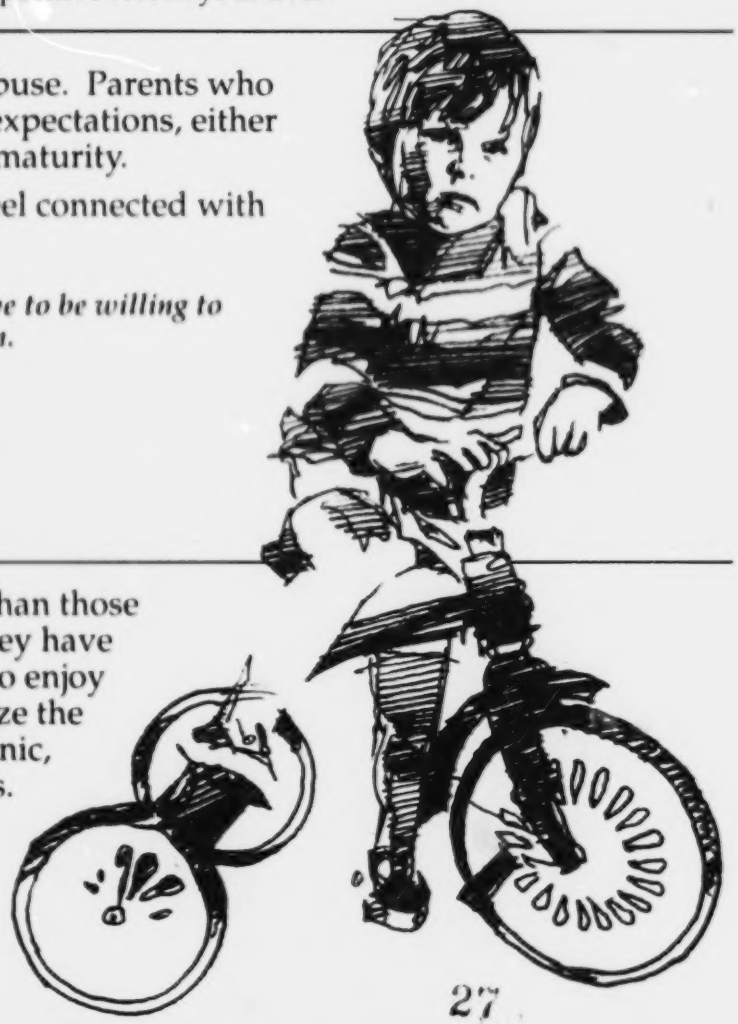
■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** think back to your childhood. Did you ever feel unhappy because you were different from other members of your family? Did you ever feel that you were not living up to your parents' expectations? How did this affect you? Re-examine the temperament ratings you made for yourself and your children. How can each of these characteristics play a positive role in your lives?

Expecting too much from a child is associated with child abuse. Parents who lose control may not realize that a child cannot meet their expectations, either because of innate temperamental characteristics or lack of maturity.

Children who believe they are accepted and wanted will feel connected with others. They will feel "at home" in their family.

Children will feel significant only if we invest time in them. We have to be willing to make sacrifices to be with them, to give them our exclusive attention.

Be available to your children.
Involve them in your interests and hobbies.
Show interest in their activities.



Every child needs to feel special. One of the worst experiences anyone can have is to be invisible, to be a non-person.

There are no sadder parents than those who discover, too late, that they have squandered the opportunity to enjoy their children's company. Seize the moment—go for a walk, a picnic, or play a game with your kids. Yes, keep some space in your life for yourself. But share a significant part of yourself with your children.

Week 4

Encouragement: I am a dreamer

The second core belief underlying self-esteem is the conviction that the future holds promise. If we want to strengthen our children's hope in the future, our words and actions should convey this message:

You have a wonderful future ahead of you, one filled with all sorts of possibilities. Aspire to a goal worthy of your life. Pursue your dreams.

Children may reveal their dreams to us during casual conversation.

"I'm going to be a cowboy when I grow up," says the preschooler. "I'm going to teach school like my dad," announces a grade schooler. "The Air Force Academy is my first step toward becoming an astronaut," asserts a high school junior.

Talk with children about their goals.

Encourage young children to set goals in their play. For example, you might say, "You are going to build a tower? Show me when you're done."

Encourage older children to make plans to reach immediate goals and begin thinking about their long-range goals. Help them envision all sorts of possibilities that suit their interests and abilities.

Never ridicule or criticize children's dreams, even if you think they are unrealistic. Try to help them understand what they may have to do to reach their goals. Expand their vision to include other, related options that might be available to them if they decide to make a change.

A child's dream for the future is one of the most precious and deeply personal confidences he or she may express to a parent. If we show indifference or belittle these hopes, we create a gulf between us that will be difficult to bridge. A child will keep this part of his or her life secret rather than risk being hurt again.

Parental support is positively associated with self-esteem. Children who "own" their goals are more highly motivated to achieve them. They are directed more by their inner values and aspirations than by external pressures.

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** make a list of the goals you had as a child. What did you want to be when you grew up? Did you share these dreams with anyone else? How did they react? What are your goals for the future now? Talk with your children about these old and new hopes.

Young children's perspectives of the future are limited by the simple way they view the world around them. A preschool boy who says, "I'm going to marry you when I grow up, mommy," reveals little awareness of the effects of time and social propriety. But his comments show both love for his mother and a belief that he can make a positive future happen.

Preschool children are typically more concerned about their immediate future. They may, for example, worry about being separated from their parents or being harmed by someone.

At about age 4, children begin to expand their time perspective and show an interest in their past. They love to hear parents talk to them about what they were like as babies. They also enjoy hearing stories about their parents' youth.

Grade schoolers are more capable of reflecting on their future. They are able to set more abstract goals for themselves—for example, to become a wonderful dancer, a skilled artist, or a loving parent. But they are not capable of evaluating the appropriateness of their goals or planning effectively.

Adolescents are more capable of serious planning and real commitment. Their hopes and dreams propel them into a future where they have to rely on themselves and not their parents. They want to envision a life beyond their parents' home.

The human capacity to plan ahead is based on playful daydreams of possible future events.

■ **DURING THIS WEEK...** take time to talk with your children about something delightful that happened to them when they were younger. At another time, tell them something interesting that happened to you when you were a child.

We contribute to our children's goal-setting by nurturing their imaginations. A rich imagination allows a child to envision life's possibilities.

Week 5

Empowerment: I am a champion

The third core belief underlying self-esteem is the conviction that one has influence in relationships and in one's life. If we want to empower our children—to strengthen their courage, determination, and competence—our words and actions should convey this message:

I care enough about you to provide you with the guidance you must have to grow up to be a happy and responsible person. I will use my strength to protect and nurture you. But I am also interested in what <u>you</u> think is important for yourself. I will gradually let you make more and more decisions on your own so that by the time you reach adulthood, you will be able to care for yourself. I respect you, and I know I am worthy of your respect.

Children begin working toward self-reliance and autonomy when they are toddlers. They begin to recognize themselves as separate and unique people and to assert themselves as individuals.

Being a champion means believing in one's ability to reach important goals, make decisions, and solve problems. Champions have inner strength that can be used to help themselves and others.

Children want to be protected by their parents' strength, not dominated by it.

Reasonable limits provide children with security. Unreasonable limits and extreme control make children feel powerless and contribute to their frustration and hostility.

Power does not mean physical strength or domination. It is a belief in one's ability to make things happen, to make a difference in one's life.

Adolescents who have an <u>internal</u> locus of control, who believe that what happens to them in life is a consequence of their own actions, are likely to have high self-esteem.

Parental coercion is related to low adolescent self-esteem.

■DURING THIS WEEK... take a look at how you exercise power in your relationships with your children. What kinds of decisions do you let them make? Or do you exercise strict control over their activities? What do you do to help your children feel competent and powerful?

Empowering children means providing them with opportunities to make reasonable choices and showing confidence in their abilities.

Children will take pride in what they do if they believe their successes are the result of their own abilities and efforts rather than the prodding or work of others.

■**DURING THIS WEEK...** make a list of at least four or five successes—small or large—your children have experienced in the last month. How did you react to these little victories? How did you reaffirm each child's sense of personal accomplishment? If you could not think of four successes, take some time to consider how you might introduce challenges that present your children with a chance for success.

Don't over-emphasize success. Some children, many of them gifted and talented, may try to protect their self-esteem by giving up when faced with the threat of failure, especially in competitive circumstances. Children with high self-esteem are willing to try something new and difficult. They are not "success junkies." Their self-worth does not depend on winning.

Try to "catch your child being good." Focus on positive accomplishments. Show appreciation for your child's efforts.

Provide children with opportunities to make a real contribution to the family's well-being. For example, they might help with special projects around the house, assisting with shopping, or taking part in preparing for a holiday party.

Be specific in your praise. Instead of saying, "You are such a <u>good</u> boy," you could support his efforts at helpfulness, competence, independence by saying something like, "I really appreciate your help around the house. I could never get it all done without you. Thanks."

Conversely, avoid labels like "You are such a <u>bad</u> boy." This statement disapproves of who the child <u>is</u> instead of what he or she does. There is the implication that what the child is doing is inevitable because she or he <u>is</u> bad. It would be better to say, "No, you cannot hit the kitchen table with the hammer. That ruins the table...." What children <u>do</u> does not define who they <u>are</u>.

Children want to feel as though they matter, that what they think is important to others.

Pay attention to how you listen to your children. Take seriously what they say. Get down to "eye" level when they want to talk to you. Try to listen without being judgmental.

Week 6

Love: I am a friend

The fourth core belief underlying self-esteem is the conviction that one can give and receive affection and tenderness, that one can nurture and be nurtured by others. If we want to strengthen compassion in our children, our words and actions should convey this message:

I want to be close to you; I love you. You are special to me. I am willing to reveal who I am so you can get to know me better. You can use your strength to express tenderness and concern for others. You give me joy.

The ability to offer and receive affection grows out of feeling accepted and respected.

Warm, accepting parents tend to have children with high self-esteem.

Alienated adolescents view their parents as hostile and nonaccepting.

Parental warmth is associated with positive sex-role development, social competence, popularity, and altruism.

Children with high self-esteem are more likely to share with others.

Sometimes older children and adolescents shy away from warm, affectionate contact with parents, especially in public. But they still need parents to respond to them warmly.

In one study, adolescent daughters recalled receiving less affection and support from their fathers than the fathers recalled expressing. Daughters wished they had received, and fathers wished they had given, more affection and support.

Unfortunately, many parents—especially fathers—may feel insecure about expressing affection in public. They may avoid hugging or kissing their children for fear of public criticism and gossip.

Love has to be clearly expressed to be felt. Children do not thrive from hearing about our love. They must experience it.

■**DURING THIS WEEK...** recall the special people who provided you with support when you were growing up. How did they express affection for you? If possible, write a letter to one of these special people and let them know what they did that was so important for you. How have these people contributed to your relationship with your children?

Take time to give your children special attention.

Express affection through tender physical contact.

Tell your children from time to time that they are loved. Loving deeds convey the power of a parent's affection; loving words provide a clear, direct statement of how a parent feels. Affection is most powerful when conveyed through words and actions.

■**DURING THIS WEEK...** make a list of the ways you express your love for your children. How do you demonstrate your affection for them? Make a second list of ways your children express their love for you. When you are through, ask your children to think of all the ways love is expressed in your relationships with them. Share what you had on your lists. Can you learn anything from their perspectives?

Conclusion

Nurturing self-esteem in children can be a difficult undertaking. Only by extending acceptance, encouragement, empowerment, and love to ourselves can we then offer these gifts to our children. In addition, children may resist our efforts to change the unfair or irrational beliefs they have about themselves and others.

Consider the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu's words:

Difficult things of the world
Can only be tackled when they are easy.
Big things of the world
Can only be achieved by attending to small beginnings.
A tree as big as a man's embrace springs
From a tiny sprout.
A tower nine stories high begins with a heap of earth.

Persistence and patience are necessary to bring about change. The challenge is great because the potential benefits are enormous. Self-esteem is the key to our children's future.

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We would like to hear about your use of *I'm Positive: Growing Up With Self-Esteem*. Send your comments and suggestions to:

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100 Ways for a Parent to Say...

1. *You're on the right track now!* **2.** *You are very good at that.* **3.** *That's the best you have ever done.* **4.** *I'm happy to see you working like that.* **5.** *Nice try!* **6.** *That's the way to do it.* **7.** *I knew you could do it.* **8.** *Now you've figured it out.* **9.** *Now you have it.* **10.** *OUTSTANDING!* **11.** *Keep working on it, you're getting better.* **12.** *You're really working hard today.* **13.** *You're a great help!* **14.** *You're getting better every day.* **15.** *You're really growing up!* **16.** *You figured that out fast.*

17. *You're a real prince (or princess).* **18.** *You did that very well.* **19.** *Nice going.* **20.** *That's a kind thing you did.* **21.** *Keep it up!* **22.** *SUPER!* **23.** *You*

50. *Nobody's perfect.* **51.** *You certainly did well today.* **52.** *You're doing beautifully.* **53.** *Congratulations!* **54.** *That's quite an improvement.* **55.** *That's a masterpiece!* **56.** *EXCELLENT!* **57.** *That's the best ever.* **58.** *You're doing fine.* **59.** *You are learning fast.* **60.** *THAT'S IT!* **61.** *Couldn't have done it better myself.* **62.** *You really make being a parent fun.* **63.** *TERRIFIC!* **64.** *You did it that time!* **65.** *You haven't missed a thing.* **66.** *Now you've figured it out.* **67.** *That's the way!* **68.** *DYNAMITE!* **69.** *Keep up the hard work.* **70.** *Nothing can stop you now!* **71.** *Good for you!* **72.** *You've got your brain in gear today.* **73.** *WONDERFUL!* **74.** *You did a lot of work today!* **75.** *Nice going.*

76. *Now that's what I call a fine job!*

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21. Keep it up! 22. SUPER! 23. You make it look easy. 24. When I'm with you I feel like singing! 25. I sure a.n happy you are my child. 26. That's my boy (or girl)! 27. I'm very proud of you. 28. I'm proud of the way you worked today. 29. You can do it! 30. You'll do better next time! 31. I think you've got it now. 32. Keep on trying! 33. You've got that down pat! 34. Good thinking! 35. You are doing that much better today. 36. You've just about got it. 37. You're really going to town! 38. You're rea!!y improving. 39. I love you! 40. SUPERB! 41. That's much better! 42. That's really nice. 43. I like that. 44. FANTASTIC! 45. That's right! 46. You must have been practicing! 47. I appreciate your help. 48. One more time and you'll have it. 49. SENSATIONAL! that's what I call a fine job! 77. It's a pleasure to be a mommy (or daddy) when you work like that. 78. You've just about mastered that! 79. Right on! 80. Good remembering! 81. You are really learning a lot. 82. You've got a great future! 83. FINE! 84. You're doing the best you can! 85. TREMENDOUS! 86. You out-did yourself today! 87. PERFECT! 88. You remembered. 89. Now you have the hang of it! 90. GREAT! 91. Well, look at you go! 92. That gives me a happy feeling. 93. That's a friendly thing to do! 94. CLEVER! 95. You're like a beautiful (name object), (name child). 96. Way to go. 97. MARVELOUS! 98. You're beautiful. 99. CONGRATULATIONS. You got (name behavior) right. 100. LOVELY!

Suggestion: Be specific when you praise a child. For example "I'mmm, you worked very hard on that model. Now it's finished. Great!"

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